

EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF ENERGY SECURITY

ANALYSIS OF ENERGY SECURITIZATION DISCOURSES 2014-2017

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| Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract <p>For long energy trade has been viewed as an important element of EU– (Soviet) Russia relations. The West European energy engagement with what was then Soviet Union that emerged in late 1960s over the next decades evolved into an important strategic partnership in between the European Union (EU) and the Russian Federation (Russia), with considerable degree of interdependence surrounding their energy ties.</p> <p>Although the EU-Russia energy relations are, in general, concerned with both oil and natural gas, in the present research the author narrowed down the notion of energy to natural gas assigning this commodity a unique importance in the analysis of energy politics between the two. This is given the difference in the structural and economic terms of its trade when compared to other types of fossil fuels, which leads to path-dependent nature of energy relations between the actors involved.</p> <p>The disruptions of Russian natural gas supplies to Europe in 2006 and 2009 as a result of Ukraine-Russia gas disputes already contributed to concerns in regards to security of Russian energy supplies and corresponding natural gas demand from the side of the EU in the light of long-standing interdependence of the energy trade between the two. That being said, the subsequent 2014 Ukrainian crisis involving Russia's annexation of Crimea and yet another Ukraine-Russia gas dispute can be seen as a turning point in the EU-Russia relations in the context of energy trade.</p> <p>The present study drew from previous research on the topic and, using a securitization theory coined by Copenhagen School of Security Studies as an analytical framework, deploys discourse analysis as a methodological tool in order to examine series of political rhetoric over the years 2014-2017 pertaining to the issue of EU-Russia relations when it comes to security of energy supplies.</p> <p>The analysis of the content of both EU's and Russia's energy securitization discourses revealed a presence of some cross related key themes that demonstrate certain similarities as well as differences in actors' interpretations of their mutual energy trade and the implications of such for each of the party's respective energy securities. It may be argued that over the years 2014-2017 Russia has been going through the process of <i>de-securitization</i> of its energy relations with the European Union. That being said over the same period the EU has been going through the processes of <i>securitization</i> of its relations with Russian Federation.</p> | | | |
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TABLE OF CONTENT

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1. Mapping the Research Topic. | 1 |
| 1.2. Aim and Scope of the Study. | 3 |
| 1.3 Research Questions. | 5 |
| 1.4. Thesis Structure..... | 6 |
| 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH. | 7 |
| 2.1. Theorizing EU-Russia Energy Relations: From Realist to Constructivist Approach..... | 7 |
| 2.2. Scholarly Approaches to Understanding the EU-Russia Energy Relations | 11 |
| 3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA | 15 |
| 3.1. Methodology | 15 |
| 3.2. Sources and Data | 17 |
| 4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE EU-RUSSIA ENERGY RELATIONS | 19 |
| 4.1. The Early 1960s: Natural Gas Exports Become a National Policy Priority for the Soviet Union and Europe Starts to Look at the Prospect of Diversification of its Energy Supply | 19 |
| 4.2. The Late 1960s: The Commenced of the First Long-term Exports of Natural Gas from the USSR to Western Europe | 21 |
| 4.3. The 1970s: The Decade of the Deepening Dependence of European States from Soviet Gas..... | 22 |
| 4.4. The 1980s: The Construction of the Export Infrastructure..... | 23 |
| 4.5. The 1990-2000s: The Period of Gas Disruptions and Return of the Question of Energy Security | 24 |
| 4.6. Ukrainian Crisis 2013/2014 and its impact on EU-Russia relations in the field of energy trade..... | 27 |
| 5. SECURITIZATION DISCOURSES IN THE EU-RUSSIA ENERGY RELATIONS | 31 |
| 5.1 Analysis of the content of The EU's Energy Securitization Discourses on Russian Federation 2014-2017 | 31 |
| 5.2. Analysis of the content of Russia's Energy Securitization Discourses on the European Union 2014-2017..... | 36 |
| 5.3. Comparison of the EU's and Russian Federation's Respective Energy Securitization Discourses 2014-2017..... | 42 |
| 6. CONCLUSION. | 47 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 53 |
| SPEECHES, INTERVIEWS AND STATEMENTS..... | 58 |

1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Mapping the Research Topic.

For modern economics, energy is an indispensable element for any country's economy. The United Nations (UN) energy report has once highlighted that "energy today is at the heart of every economic, environmental and development issue" (UN, 2008, p.6). Likewise, the European Commission emphasized that "Energy is the life blood of the society.

The prosperity of the community, industry, and economy depends up on safe, secure, sustainable, and affordable energy (European Commission, 2011, p. 4).

The West European energy engagement with what was then Soviet Union that emerged in late 1960s over the next decades evolved into an important strategic partnership in between the European Union (EU) and the Russian Federation (Russia), with considerable degree of interdependence surrounding their energy ties.

The European Union is the world's largest energy importer with natural gas having a considerable share in the overall extra-EU imported energy mix. According to Eurostat, in 2017 natural gas accounted for 20% of the EU imports in energy products (Eurostat, July 2018, p.1). In this instance, Russia, and more precisely Gazprom, is the largest single supplier of natural gas to European markets.¹ Such as, in the Q4 of 2017 Russia's share in the EU imports of natural gas stood at 43.0 % or approx. 27% of EU's gas consumption making it the top-EU suppliers of this vital commodity alongside Norway (European Commission, 2017, p.10). Moreover, it was stated that in 2017 ten EU Member States² imported more than 75 % of total national imports of natural gas from Russia (Eurostat, July 2018, p.7). Moreover, in 2014 the European Commission pointed out that six Member States³ were dependent from Russia as single external source for their entire gas imports with three of them using natural gas for more than a quarter of their total energy needs (European Commission, 2014, p.2).

Russian Federation has by far the biggest proven natural gas reserves in the world. According to June 2017 BP Statistical Review of Energy, the country was rated second in the world for

¹ Gazprom is a Russian energy giant with 51% of company's shares under the government control.

² The EU member states with the highest level of dependency of Russian gas are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland.

³ Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia with last three in the list using Russian gas for more than 25% of total energy needs.

its proven natural gas reserves, with production output corresponding to ca. 17% of the global total of this strategically important commodity, it is also the world's biggest natural gas exporter.⁴ Russian economy is heavily contingent on oil and gas exports, which, according to the Russian Ministry of Finance, in 2017 accounted for 39.6% of the country's federal budget revenues, with approximately quarter of those coming from the sales of natural gas (Rus.MinFin, 2017). As Gazprom data suggests, in 2017 approximately 81% of the total Russian gas exports went to the EU with the largest volumes to Germany and Italy.

Since the turn of the century rapidly rising world energy prices in the light of increasing global demand has placed energy in the list of security issues with energy resources becoming an integral part of countries' foreign and national security policies. As Hadfield (2008, p.323) asserts "states now desire energy security in the same sense that they desire military of economic security".

Despite these emphases on the importance of *energy security*, it may be argued that the concept in itself remains vague and somewhat undefined. Such as Cherp and Jewell (2014, p.416) emphasize that energy security "finds different expressions under different conditions". This, all other things equal, points out on one of the most prominent characteristic of the concept, namely conceptuality. For example, it needs to be understood that there are two dimensions to energy security, namely security of demand and security of supply.

With the reference to the matter at stake, although EU-Russia energy partnership is driven by mutual pursuit of energy security, each of the sides assign a very different meaning to its respective energy security, which in turn serves a basis for their conflicting interests in the field. Such as, whilst for the EU energy security is primarily concerned with the *security of supply* and thus can be understood as the "availability of energy[...], in sufficient quantity and at affordable prices, delivered in an environmentally friendly, sustainable manner which is also free from serious risk of major disruptions of service", for Russia energy security is related to the *security of demand*, and can thus be defined as a "quest for a market for [...] energy exports which correlates to increased (government) revenues" (Kirchner & Berk, 2010, p.864).

⁴ At the end of 2016 Russia's share of world total proved gas reserves was 17.3% vs. Iran 18%.

The issue of energy security may presently be seen as an inherent component of EU-Russia relations in the field. That said, the processes of social construction of this issues together with differences in meanings each of the actors assign to their respective energy securities seem to need further academic inquiry. Likewise Tichy (2016, p.61) points out that “these aspects of EU-Russia relations, which could contribute to a deeper understanding of the issue of energy relations in its complexity, has been, with just a few exceptions, disregarded in the expert literature”.

Therefore, this thesis is primarily motivated by the recognition that more needs to be done to understand how both of the actors comprehend the “energy security issue”. This is because understanding the fundamentals of how the problem is being understood and articulated by the EU and RF can further inform about the steps they may choose to take, potential challenges they might face along the way as well as implications this all might have on their respective policy-making.

1.2. Aim and Scope of the Study.

The subject of the present study will be securitization of the EU-Russia energy trade, in particular the author will aim at analysis of socially constructed security concerns that may influence the EU and Russia relations in the field.

Although the EU-Russia energy relations are, in general, concerned with both oil and natural gas, in the present research the author will narrow down the notion of energy to natural gas assigning this commodity a unique importance in the analysis of energy politics between the two. This is primarily due to the fact that natural gas trade is different in its structural and economic terms when compared to trading of other forms of energy commodities (Belyi 2015, p. 42). Such as “while oil is traded in a virtually global market, gas trade is dependent on transport through inflexible pipelines, affording consumer and supplier countries little flexibility and alternatives in terms of trade routes and partners” (Pick, 2012, p.327). This all contributes to markedly bilateral character of the gas market, with contracting parties at each end of the pipeline (Goldthau 2008, p.686). Moreover, natural gas pipeline infrastructure projects always require large investments with horizons of several decades and costs at times covered by locking both exporter and importer into long-term contracts (Romanova, 2007, p.1). This fact in turn contributes to path-dependent nature of energy relations, as far as a gas

trade is concerned, with states on opposite sides of a pipe being bounded for years in mutual energy dependency.

That said, whilst the technology of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) allows for gas transfer in between seller and buyer without a need for pipeline infrastructure, LNG is having some drawbacks due to relatively high costs and the need to be stored in expensive cryogenic tanks. This makes it not commercially feasible solution for a very large-scale use, thus not affecting EU-Russia gas trade that mainly runs through pipeline.

From the theoretical perspective the present study of the EU-Russian energy relations relies on insights from the school of Constructivism with backbone of the research being the securitization theory as appeared in Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde's 1998 book "Security: A New Framework for Analysis". This theory will be given a more thorough attention in Chapter 2 of the thesis.

The disruptions of Russian natural gas supplies to Europe in 2006 and 2009 as a result of Ukraine-Russia gas disputes already contributed to concerns in regards to security of Russian energy supplies and corresponding natural gas demand from the side of the EU in the light of long-standing interdependence of the energy trade between the two. Having said that, the subsequent 2014 Ukrainian crisis involving Russia's annexation of Crimea and yet another Ukraine-Russia gas dispute can be seen as a turning point in the EU-Russia relations in the context of the energy trade. This is guided by the logic that a crisis event is likely to trigger an acceleration of securitization discourses, the study will regard the year of 2014 as a starting point for analysis.

In connection to that, it is important to acknowledge the significance of the role Ukraine plays in the EU-Russia energy ties. Apart from being a home to important for Gazprom gas storage facilities, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country's territory has also been an important transit route for ca. 80% of Russia's gas exports to Western Europe (Balmaceda, 2013, p.94). Therefore, in the face of Ukrainian crisis that emerged in early 2014 further to Russia's annexation of Crimea and given ongoing Russia-Ukraine gas fights the political discussions on security of the EU-Russia natural energy trade were likely to be accelerated.

This is because the act of securitization is generally understood to have a negative connotation, and is commonly arises in a situation of, as McDonald (2008, p.581) puts it, “suspension of ‘normal politics’ in dealing with the issue”. With the process of “securitization” being described as a discursive construction of a particular issue as security threat (McDonald, 2008, p.568). The overall timeframe of the study is being defined as a period of 2014-2017. It has also be noted that the authors considers the Ukrainian crisis merely as a triggering event for acceleration of the EU-Russia energy securitization discourses and thus placing any analysis and discussions related to the EU and Russia energy relations with transit countries out of the scope of the current research.

1.3 Research Questions.

Based on the general aim of this thesis the author identifies three research objectives, which will be reached by answering a series of interrelated research questions. Firstly, the author will analyze securitization discourses on the energy relations of the European Union with Russia and Russia with the European Union over the aforementioned period and to establish the core topics within this framework, thus finding the basic themes of the EU and the Russian Federation securitization discourses on energy relations with each other. Secondly, the study will recognize the ways both the EU and Russia are reflected on each in their rhetoric in regards to their respective energy securities, answering the questions: How is Russian Federation perceived in the EU’s energy securitization discourses? and How is the EU perceived in the Russian Federation’s energy securitization discourses? Finally, the goal is to establish similarities and differences of the EU’s and Russia’s respective securitization discourses on their relations with one another in the years 2014-2017 in the context of energy trade. This in turn will lead to answering the main research question: To what extend do the EU’s and the RF’s energy securitization discourses overlap or differ?

It has to be noted that, whilst the author acknowledges the fact of divergence in positions of single EU member states with regards to natural gas trade with Russia, which in turn has a negative effect of securitization on the framing of the EU’s common energy policy (a good account of this issue was presented in the work of Natorski & Surrallés (2008)). Such as, in example, the fact that some EU countries revealed to be particularly exposed to Russian-Ukrainian gas disputes and the direct and indirect effects of this upon other Union members

have increasingly led to energy issues being framed through a national security lens (Tosun et al., 2015, p.199). Having mentioned that, the present study will regard the European Union as a single entity thus placing each individual member state's perspective out of the direct scope of intended analysis. The author, however, aims to allocate this matter a certain degree of attention in final chapter of this research work.

1.4. Thesis Structure.

Whilst this chapter, **Chapter 1** is an introductory guide mapping the research topic, defining the scope and aim of the study as well as outlining research questions. **Chapter 2**, serves a foundational purpose. Such as, the aim of the Chapter 2 is to present the theoretical elements and as well as provides with reference to scholarly research already done on topic. **Chapter 3** will further provide with methodological tools used for data analysis together with information on the sources and data used for the purpose of the present research. Following **Chapter 4** contributes with historical account of the EU-Russia relations in the field of energy trade since 1960s to 2000s thus introducing some background, which provides information as to how the EU-Russia energy cooperation emerged and developed and how energy matter become a problematic aspect of the strategic partnership between the two. Following this historical inquiry, as a matter of a logical continuation, the background of the Ukraine crisis of 2014 is discussed with a purpose of providing a platform for the main part of the thesis - **Chapter 5**. This aims at analysis of content of EU securitization discourses on the Union's energy relations with Russian Federation as well as content of Russia's securitization discourses on its relations with the EU in the field of energy trade in the years 2014-2017, it also provides with comparison of the EU's and Russian Federation's respective energy securitization discourses for the given timeframe. Finally, **Chapter 6** draws up a conclusion with author looking to elaborate on main research findings.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH.

2.1. Theorizing EU-Russia Energy Relations: From Realist to Constructivist Approach.

It may be argued that there are three main theoretical trends in international relations, in particular with regards to those concerned with energy politics, which serve as core explanatory frameworks for developments in EU-Russia relations in the field. Those are more conventional realist and liberal approaches, which explanations are primarily based on technical and institutional aspects of relations between the two actors; and more recently emerged constructivist perspective that highlights the role of ideas and perception and subsequent discursive formations that determine the relationship between the parties concerned.

The social constructivist approach argues that rather than material factors, socially constructed concepts are crucial to understanding a manner of state's actions in international relations. A notable contributor to constructivist school Alexander Wendt once asserted that "500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons" (Wendt 1995, p.73). By further elaborating on this claim, it implies that according to constructivist approach this, perhaps for some irrational, understanding of a threat is based upon socially constructed meanings and perceptions the US leaders assign to their respective relations with each of the above named states as opposed to, for example, their actual military capabilities. These, in turn, direct the course of any given state's policy-making thus getting subsequently reflected in its behaviour in the international system.

Such as, in accordance to Wendt (1999, p.332), "the most important thing in social life is how actors present self and other. These representations are the starting point for interaction, and the medium by which they determine who they are, what they want, and how they should behave". Thus social constructivism helps at showing how relations between any given actors are shaped by their perceptions of realities and the positioning of the Self in relation to the Other. With the reference to the case in hands this means by the socially constructed ideas and beliefs of the EU and Russia about their energy relations and corresponding threats one of the states may pose to the other one's strategic interests in the context of energy security.

Furthermore, as Wendt (1999, p.335) suggests, any given actors' interaction in the international system is subjected to the socially constructed meanings those actors attribute to

themselves when seeking themselves as an object, from the perspective of the other.

Correspondingly, by means of repeated interactions, such actors' identification of themselves with each other may have either positive or negative connotation (Wendt 1994, p.386). The identification in between self and the other lead to interdependence to be conceived as either reciprocal and mutually supportive - "amity" or harmful for each of the states own strategic interests, defined in terms of relative gains - "enmity" (ibid.).

The negative side of the relational spectrum may be further understood through the lens of realist approach to international relations. The realist perspective suggests that all states in the international system are unitary, rational actors whose main objective is to pursue their national interests, defined in terms of power and security (Morgenthau, 1985, p.9). In the context of energy, security may be conceptualized as unrestricted access to and/or control over energy resources. Subsequently, once the sufficient level of security is established this may further be deployed by states as a leverage to attain their wider political objectives through the use this economic capability. As Huntington (1993, p.72) puts it, economics "is, indeed, probably the most important source of power, and in the world in which military conflict between states is unlikely, economics becomes increasingly important in determining the primacy and subordination of states." Correspondingly, energy can be seen as a political tool used to compete on the international arena with the purpose of achieving global supremacy.

Likewise, Morgenthau (1985, pp.82-86) claims that in the international system energy resources constitute elements of power which enable to influence system as well as its individual actors. Moreover, given the finite nature of energy resources the energy politics, according to realist premises, is seen by participating actors as a zero-sum game and hence their decisions are guided by the "aim to minimize the other parties' relative gains, because the relative gain of the counterpart in terms of energy security is regarded as one's own loss" (Esakova, 2012, p.50).

On the contrary, the positive side of the relational spectrum is presented by the liberal claim that defines energy politics as a positive-sum game benefiting all of the actors involved in the energy related transactions and also placing a particular importance to the aspect of complex interdependence between states in the international relations (as formulated in Keohane & Nye, 1973, pp.158-165). This is due to the fact that countries energy importers are having

advantage of the access to energy crucial for stable functioning of their economies and central to welfare of their citizens (Siddi, 2017, p.368). At the same time energy exporting states are benefiting from financial revenues from energy sales, foreign investment flows as well as import of manufactured goods (ibid.). Therefore, the liberal theory claims that interdependence and commercial ties in general reduce the incentives for conflict thus having a pacifying effect on relations between actors involved (Kuzemko et al., 2016, pp.10-12). This is because any conflict is considered to eventually be proved harmful for each of the partners' own national interests.

It has to be noted that, while both realist and liberal approaches certainly provide useful perspectives concerning EU-Russia energy cooperation and thus can serve as good departure point for analysis, it may be argued that they do not provide sufficient justice to complexities of the EU-Russia relation in the field. In contrast, constructivism allows accounting for the complexity of the topic and provides a toolkit for understanding not just policy outcomes, but also processes of reaching those outcomes. Likewise, Kratochvil and Tichy (2013, p.4) point out that “any analysis exclusively based on material grounds would seem incomplete without understanding the ideational frameworks through which both the EU and Russia attach meaning to energy security, interpret their energy relations as mutual dependence as either beneficial or threatening which, after all, influence both of the actors' decision about the concrete political steps with regards to their cooperation in the field”.

In the context of constructivist approach the notion of securitization first articulated in a paper, ‘Security the Speech Act: Analysing the Politics of a Word’, by Ole Wæver in 1989, which he then further developed in ‘Securitization and De-securitization’ (1995) and in collaboration with Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde in ‘Security: a New Framework for Analysis’ (1998), provides with interesting avenue for understanding which social phenomena is singled out as the focus of decision-making when states are believed to be confronted with a threat. These scholars of Copenhagen School of Security Studies adopted a constructivist perspective in presenting security as ‘a referential practice’ that is socially constructed also succeeding in transcending the constructed nature of security threats by broadening security studies into non-military sectors. In particular, economic security, applicable to the matter of energy trade, has been interpreted as “access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power” (Buzan et al., 1998, p.20).

The main text on securitization theory – *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (1998), suggests that the issue may be either politicized, such as being part of ordinary political debates and reflected in relevant state policies or securitized, such as being seen to endanger state's national security and strategic interests calling to be dealt with measures outside of normal political practices (Buzan et al., 1998, p.24). In other words the issue can be either in the process of securitization or undergoing through the process of de-securitization by any given state's political actors. This takes place by the way of discursive practices with distinct consequences in the context over international politics.

In this instance securitization is identified as “the discursive process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.491). Thus placing a subject into the security domain provides the possibility for a political actor to legitimize particular policies and at times extraordinary means aimed at protection of the referent object from an existential threat. Likewise, Wæver asserts that ‘by uttering ‘security’ a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it’ (Wæver, 1995, p.55). In contrast, de-securitization refers to “a process in which a political community downgrades or ceases to treat something as an existential threat to a valued object, and reduces or stops calling for exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.489).

It may thus be claimed that, securitization theory provides with a good avenue for understanding if and how a matter becomes and is accepted as an energy security threat by political actors from both Russia and the EU, which in turn contributes to a better understanding of implications these constructions may pose for the development of common EU-Russia energy approach. In addition, an advantage of securitization theory for analysis of energy relations may be seen in the fact that it gives consideration to both material and immaterial factors. It is thus providing a good toolkit for analysis of the EU-Russia natural gas trade, a field in which material infrastructure and economics gets intertwined with political and security concerns. In addition, theorization of security concerns of both actors and determination of their respective views on gas trade helps to understand the reasons behind their possible securitization of the trade in question as well as factors influential for their decision-making process.

2.2. Scholarly Approaches to Understanding the EU-Russia Energy Relations.

Energy has not only been a significant attribute of the EU-Russia cooperation but also a long-term issue and one the most discussed. The growing importance of the topic is evidenced of scholarly research conducted in the last two decades on the topic of energy relations between these two actors.

Having said that, it should equally be noted that a substantial fraction of these studies was concerned with material factors of the energy interactions between the European Union and the Russian Federation, such as, for instance, the EU's dependency of Russia's gas supply vs. dependence of Russian economy on the EU energy market. In particular, the matter of mutual vulnerability was seen as the one tying knots of EU-Russia energy ties, whereas high degree of sensitivity from both sides to their mutual energy trade being a conflictive element in relations between the two (Proedrou, 2007, p.347).

In addition, it was argued that EU-Russia strong interdependence in the context of energy trade, despite the existence of considerable conflict potential and inherently different approaches to energy relation from both sides, is likely to bind these actors together since both of the parties acknowledge the essentiality of their cooperation in the field (Pick, 2012, pp.355-356). Interestingly, and on contrary, some scholars argued that instead of bringing the EU and Russia closer together, "energy interdependence [seen as a zero-sum game] has actually exacerbated tensions between the two and given rise to new security and relative gains concerns" (Krickovic, 2015, p.19).

Moreover, considerable attention has been given to issues related to political instrumentalisation of energy exports by Russia. For example, the use of its "energy weapon"⁵ within the context of so called "carrots and sticks" approach designed to offer lucrative export terms to compliant allies and challenge neighbors who defy Kremlin's wish (Newnham, 2011, p.138). There are also some scholars pointing out on the potential energy bargaining power of transit countries vis-à-vis Russian Government and Russia's state energy actors (Balmaceda, 2013, p.94).

⁵ The concept of an energy weapon denotes "an energy supplier state uses its resources as a political tool to either punish or coerce (or sometimes a combination of both) its customers" (Stegen 2011, 6512).

In addition, some attention in scholarly work was devoted to analysis of the institutional structures embedded in the relationships between the two. Such as it was highlighted that the EU-Russia energy cooperation was being negatively influenced by developments in their respective internal energy markets (Kaveshnikov, 2010, pp.592-601). Likewise, the issue of contradictions between EU's normative power approach and institutional environment of Russian energy sector were discussed (Boussena & Locatelli, 2013, pp.183-185). In particular, the EU's failed approach to institutionalise its energy relations, which happened to be a in direct clash with Russian realpolitik approach to international relations, was seen to contribute to transformation of their "strategic partnership" into "strategic rivalry" (Helen, 2010, pp.2-3). It was also noted that early EU Commission's initiative to promote interdependence through market opening in fact had damaging impact on consumer/supplier relations between Russia and the EU because it neglected the specific aims and propensities of Russian state and Gazprom (Van Der Meulen, 2009, pp.848-852).

As early suggested, a somewhat lack of attention can be noticed in regards to attempts made towards understanding of how socially constructed ideas and identity-based narratives shape the course of actions of the European Union and Russian Federation towards each other in the case of their mutual energy trade.

Having said that, some scholars did contribute with their work aiming at understanding of subjective perceptions and identity based interpretations that come at play in EU-Russia energy cooperation. Such as some authors, for example, highlighted the divergence in visions between the Russia and the EU as far as their energy cooperation is concerned (Casier, 2011), as well as differences in ideas in regards to the organisation of energy markets (Kuzemko, 2014), also the issues related to the rise and fall of EU-Russia Energy Dialogue were examined reviling a strong divergence in understanding of energy security amongst the two sides concerned (Hadfield, 2008).

In has to be noted, the 2014 crisis in Ukraine, involving Russia's illicit annexation of Crimea together with the country's halts of its energy supplies to Ukrainian customers and when coupled with EU's involvement in the matter with restrictive measures introduced against its Russian counterpart had a significant impact on the EU-Russia relations. And, given the Ukraine role as the major Russian natural gas transit to the EU, arguably brought about new political realities under the conditions of which the EU-Russia energy partnership had to operate.

On the back of such political and economic tensions the academic world manifested itself with a growing amount of scholarly research aiming to address the EU-Russia relations through the prism of the energy cooperation between the parties. In this case it is worthwhile pointing out that on the whole scholarly attention has once again predominantly been placed on the impact of both material factors and institutional structures in the EU-Russia energy relations. That being said, a certain degree of recognition in academic literature available in the field has still been given to the fact that rather than supremacy of Russian gas in the European energy sector or the importance of the revenues of European sales for Russia's economy or the policy frameworks governing energy cooperation between the two, it is also ideas and perceptions of both of the actors about their relation to be seen as truly fundamental. To that end a focus has been drawn to analysis of EU and Russia political discourses on energy (in)security relating to the questions of energy dependence and perceptions of the states about each other and their partnership in the energy sphere.

Such as McGowen (2011) taking the matter of energy security into the historical context and applies the securitization theory to the EU political debates related to disruptions of energy supply. His analysis concludes that whilst energy issue received a great degree of silence in 2000s the Union neither faced an "existential threat" nor adopted "extraordinary measures" in responding to the crises. In the similar manner Kuzemko (2014) points out on the power of ideas within policy-making and negotiating processes, which can be seen as important explanatory variables in revealing aspects of EU-Russia energy relations.

In the similar vein Cassier's (2011) study of EU-Russia cooperation in the area of gas trade seems to arrive at a somewhat similar conclusion. Such as the author suggests that the increase in politization of the energy discourse, which frames the EU's energy dependence on Russia in terms of concerns for security threat can be seen as the outcome of shifting identities and self - perceptions in EU - Russia relations. Likewise, Godzimirski (2009) explores the relations between actors' identities and subsequent policy choices bringing the matter into the context of decisions related to strategic energy projects – such as the Nord Stream pipeline.

A very good analysis of discursive formations, which, amongst other things, provided me with a great deal of inspiration to conduct my own research on the topic, is a work of Kratochvil & Tichy (2013) that explores the dominant interpretations of the EU–Russian

energy relations covering the period from 2004 to 2009. Building on the detailed multilevel political discourse analysis the study identifies three types of discursive practises in existence both within the EU and Russia. In the presence of similarity in discursive complexes in both the EU and Russia, the study revealed a divergence in interpretations of the two parties' mutual ties. Moreover, later on Tichy (2018) attempted to examine the energy security relations between Russia and the EU by focusing on analysis of the content of the Russian diversification discourse on energy relations with the European Union in 2004–2018.

Whilst some of the scholars attempted at deployment of the securitization concept coined by the Copenhagen School, there is a certain gap in the literature when it comes to use of securitization theory and the role of ideas and perceptions in regards to gas trade in general and, in particular, when the matter is taken into domain of the EU-Russia cooperation in the field.

The present thesis will take steps to overcome the presently somewhat non-discursive approaches taken to explain the EU-Russia energy interaction and to deploy a discursive framework in order to explore the European Union-Russian Federation relations in the field. Drawing from previous research, the author will more thoroughly explore one of the types of discursive practices in EU-Russia energy relations identified by the study of Kratochvil & Tichy (2013) as diversification discourse, also at times referred to as the one of securitization. In particular, the present research will be concerned with analysis of both EU and Russia respective energy securitization discourses during year 2014-2017. This approach will allow to contribute to already existing body of scholarly research by providing a more thorough examination of how the parties perceptions of one another in the context of their objectives of energy security impacts the EU-Russia relations in the field.

In addition, it has to be noted that with regards to Russia's perceptions of its relations with the European Union, the present research will seemingly end up at providing a somewhat verification of the findings of Tichy (2018) concerning Russia's perceptions of its relations with the European Union in the context of energy security.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA.

3.1. Methodology.

As far methodological framework of the present research is concerned, the author aims to deploy discourse analysis as the main research tool, which, as Paltridge puts it (2012, p.2), “examines patterns of language across texts and considers the relationships between language and the social and cultural context in which it is used”. Discourse analysis is grounded on the assumption that the differences in ways of using language represent various views of the world and different perceptions in respect of the situational context in which any given actors operate (ibid., p.3).

Moreover, this choice of the method is based on believes that political discourses “always reveal the basic principles on which the actor’s approach is based and through which he/she interprets political reality” (Kratochvil and Tichy 2013, p.4). Likewise, according to Buzan et al. (1998, p.25), “the way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations”. This is because, the Copenhagen School understands security as a speech act capable of impacting a decision-making process about security issues (Buzan et al 1998, p. 26). In connection to this, Belyi (2003, p.358) claims, that “security” is not always considered to be a direct consequence of threat, but is defined by political interpretation of that threat, which can, in turn, arguably be found in political discourses of actors in question.

It might be worthwhile nothing that, one other option could have been to use a Qualitative Content Analysis, the method used for understanding of the meaning and classifying material, which, while being in need of some degree of interpretation, is generally deemed to be comparatively standardized (Schreier, 2012, p. 29). However, given the matter at stake the author suggests that QCA would have disadvantages of being reductive, i.e. simply relying on selective words, thus largely disregarding the context in which any given material was produced and as a result being more descriptive than explanatory in general.

With the above in mind, the research will explore the securitization rhetoric produced by EU and Russia pertaining to their respective energy securities and in the context of EU-Russia trade in the field. In this instance the securitization theory serves as integral analytical framework, which helps to identify the discourse practises relevant for analysis. It is within

its context that the essence of security is understood as existential threat to a referent object and the comprehension of the “other” from the standpoint of political revelry.

For the purpose of analysis the dataset collected by the author consist of political speech acts, interviews and statements produced in various occasions and under different circumstances by core political actors from the European Union and Russian Federation. Guided by the framework suggested in the study of Tichy (2016, p.65), the author chose only speeches, interviews and statements with an occurrence of the keyword “Russia” or “Russian” in combination with the word “energy”, “energy security” and “gas” for the EU originated data. In the identical manner keywords “the EU”, “Europe” or “European Union” in a combination with the word “energy”, “energy security” and “gas” were used as a basis for the selection of documents produced by the Russian side.

In addition, an inclusion of a material into the dataset was conditional to a presence in it some specific terms such as: energy security (in terms of insuring the stability of energy supplier to Europe as well as insuring the persistence of demands for Russian energy exports), alternative transportation routes and supply sources (as a move aimed at decreasing European dependence of Russian natural gas exports and improve security and diversity of EU’s energy supply or to consolidate the Russia’s presence in the European energy market), energy cooperation with third countries (Russian efforts to enhance the country’s position in the global energy market, thus ensuring the its energy security), energy infrastructure outside Russia (to ensure the energy security), third transit countries (in terms of being a threat to energy security), diversification (to ensure energy security).

This selection approach, defined by Kratochvil and Tichy (2013, p.396), was used to filter securitization discourses out of other EU-Russia discourses on their relations in the field of energy trade. It is worthwhile noting that in this instance the securitization discourses are understood as those accounting for political and economic consequences of energy dependence of the actors involved and deriving from the need for energy security (Kratochvil and Tichy 2013, p.395).

The content of all collected securitization discourses is thoroughly analyses by the way or repeated reading in order to identify the main concepts in relation to securitization of the energy trade and perceptions of each of the actors towards the other when their relations is

viewed in the context of energy security. The main concepts together with perceptions are later compared to define an extent to which the EU and the RF securitization discourses overlap or differ.

Importantly, any form of formal documents produced by either Russia or European institutions, for example Russia Foreign Policy Concepts or documents relevant to establishment of the Energy Union and European Energy Security Strategy are not included in the analyzed dataset. This exclusion was made on the basis of author's belief that such documents merely constitute a formal consolidation of the results of political debates. In contrast political speech acts are seen as the best reflection of ideas and perceptions and, given the nature and the aim of this research, are important to be examined.

3.2. Sources and Data.

From a practical standpoint, the study is looking to examine a series of speeches, interviews and statements of the key European Union policy-makers and Russian political elite concerning the EU-Russia energy trade during 2014-2017. The overall sample size collected consists of 70 textual units.

The selection of the documents for the years 2014-2017 were limited to following key political actors from the European Union: The President of the European Commission **Jean-Claude Juncker (José Manuel Durão Barroso** until November 2014); the European Commissioner for Energy **Miguel Arias Cañete (Günther H. Oettinger** until November 2014); the EU Trade Commissioner **Cecilia Malmström**; the European Union Ambassador to Russia **Vytautas Ušackas**; the Vice-President for Energy Union **Maroš Šefčovič**. The documents were collected from the web site of the European Commission as well as various other resources like webpages of newspapers, political events etc. **Table 1** shows the distribution of relevant data sources on a per year as well as per author basis.

Table 01: Speeches and statements of the EU representatives

| The President of the European Commission, the EU Commissioner for Energy, EU Trade Commissioner, the EU Ambassador to Russia, the Vice-President for Energy Union | Year | | | | Total by author |
|---|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | |
| José Manuel Durão Barroso / Jean-Claude Juncker | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Günther H. Oettinger / Miguel Arias Cañete | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Cecilia Malmström | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Vytautas Ušackas | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| Maroš Šefčovič | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 11 |
| Total by year | 4 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 28 |

Source: compiled by the author

In the identical manner and for the same timeframe the most relevant political representatives from the side of Russian Federation were identified as: The President of Russian Federation **Vladimir Putin**; the Minister of Energy of RF **Aleksandr Novak**; the Prime Minister of RF **Dmitry Medvedev**; the Minister of Foreign Affairs of RF **Sergey Lavrov**⁶. The documents were collected from web sites of the President, the Russian Government, the Ministry of Energy of Russian federation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation. **Table 2** shows the distribution of relevant data sources on a per year as well as per author basis.

Table 02: Speeches and statements by representatives of Russian Federation

| The President of Russian Federation, the Minister of Energy of RF, the Prime Minister of RF, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of RF | Year | | | | Total by author |
|--|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------------|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | |
| Vladimir Putin | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 11 |
| Aleksandr Novak | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| Dmitry Medvedev | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 10 |
| Sergey Lavrov | 3 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 13 |
| Total by year | 11 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 42 |

Source: compiled by the author

⁶ Sergey Lavrov, who has been the foreign minister of Russia since 2004, has a special political agency given the role of energy exports for Russia in the context of its foreign policy. Thus Lavrov's jurisdiction far precedes a Foreign Minister in an European sense which makes the inclusion of his speeches a valid one.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE EU-RUSSIA ENERGY RELATIONS.

The EU-Russia energy ties clearly did not come about overnight. Likewise, it might seem sensible a claim to make that in order to better understand and explain the nowadays developments one needs to place those in the historical context. While this section is not aiming at being a detailed historical enquiry due to the different focus of present study as well as apparent limitations in space, it will pay due regard to the historical dimension of the EU-Russia energy relations with a focus on natural gas by outlining major developments in the EU-Russia interaction in the field from 1960s to 2000s, i.e. the period prior to the chosen timeframe of the current research.

4.1. The Early 1960s: Natural Gas Exports Become a National Policy Priority for the Soviet Union and Europe Starts to Look at the Prospect of Diversification of its Energy Supply.

It should briefly be noted that, prior to the 1960s when the Soviet Union turned gas export into national policy priority, the initial interest of USSR in developing its natural gas sector can be documented as early as 1940s, induced by the cut off of the country's coal supply during the WWII due to Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union's coal-rich regions, this is when Stalin's energy planners pointed to natural gas as an interesting, though unexplored alternative to coal (Högselius, 2013, 13). It was then that the Commissariat of the Oil Industry proposed the building of a gas pipeline, linking the newly discovered gas field in Saratov, Southwest Russia, with Moscow, that became operational in 1946 and a pipeline, linking the gas field in Dashava, Galicia with Kiev was brought into operation in 1948 (ibid.). Despite the fact that the coal supplies from Ukraine and Southern Russia recovered by the end of the war, the Soviet enthusiasm for natural gas did not wear off in the post-war period and the efforts aimed at building of the national natural gas grid continued. To that end, the ministry for the gas industry – Glavgaz, was established in 1956 and the first plan for the development of the industry was unveiled on 15 August 1958 with predominant focus on the provision of direct gas supplies to major cities and between various Soviet republics (Belyi, 2015, 75).

The 1960s started with the discovery of the first giant Siberian gas field in Punga on the Ob River in January 1962 and numerous other similar discoveries in the region of Western Siberia (Högselius, 2013, 31). In this instance Glavgaz was quick to push forward the argument for further developments of the Siberian discoveries, so that they become part of the national grid and a potential source for exports in some European regions, mainly Eastern Europe – the idea that at first faced with internal opposition due to requirements for unjustifiably high investments and development of new technological solutions on behalf of the steel and machine building industries (Högselius, 2013, 33). Nevertheless, the Soviet Union decided to take on the Siberian challenge. This coincided with the ousting of the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1964 and the coming into power of Leonid Brezhnev, whose belief was that the lasting peace could be achieved through the engagement into mutually beneficial economic partnership between the USSR and the West (Perovic & Krempin, 2014, p.123). Having said that, in its willingness to get into business with the West, Moscow perceived the development of Siberian natural gas fields to be an attractive area of cooperation.

Meantime, by the mid-1960s, the Netherlands and Algeria were firmly on course of becoming Europe's major gas suppliers. Having said that, as Högselius (2013, p.35) asserts, there were several factors that made European leaders to consider prospect of natural gas imports from the Soviet Union as an alternative or complement to imports from elsewhere – the long distance of the in-between markets from the Slochteren gas field in the Netherlands and Algerian Sahara region, the realization that the Soviet Union had a “surplus for exports” as well as the trend towards relaxation (detente) of the relations between the USSR and the West. To this end, the discourse of polycentrism – the idea that political reservations towards the Soviet Union should not necessarily define the economic relations with it - was largely used to justify the European leaders' look to the East (Stent 1981, p.122).

The crucial point in this period of time was the deal between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia for the construction of a pipeline, named “Bratstvo” (Brotherhood) and the supply of natural gas as far as Bratislava, signed on 3 December 1964 (Högselius, 2013, p.35). It may be argued that this development firstly, demonstrated that the Soviet Union was willing to export its gas to users abroad and secondly, it showed that the Soviet Union intends to expand its gas exports westwards, since Czechoslovakia bordered Austria.

4.2. The Late 1960s: The Commenced of the First Long-term Exports of Natural Gas from the USSR to Western Europe.

As the matter progressed, on 1 June 1968, a historic contract from today's view was signed in Vienna, with Austria officially becoming a pioneer in what is now defined as the EU-Russia gas trade relations, with the first deliveries through Czechoslovakia starting on 10 September 1968. According to Högselius (2013, p.89), the Soviet-Austrian deal was highly important, since the Soviet Union was given a chance to demonstrate that it was a reliable supplier, which could potentially lead to more European deals. In this instance in supplying its gas to the West Soviet leaders saw both economic and political opportunities. From economic perspectives, the Ministry of Foreign Trade saw expansion in Soviet-West gas trade as a possibility to boost its, so much needed at that time, hard currency earnings (Stent, 1981, p.137). Whereas as far as political perspective was concern, gas sales to European capitalist economies were to some extent seen by Kremlin as an opportunity to provide counterweight to America's economic influence in West European affairs (Gustafson, 1989, p.280).

Yet another event in this period worth mentioning was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. It is submitted that on the one hand, it caused damage to the Soviet legitimacy, but strangely, on the other hand, paved the way for further cooperation between Western Europe and the Soviet Union. The reason for this was that the Soviet Union now was willing to show more flexibility compared to its approach with Austria due to the need to recover its legitimacy, which in turn triggered the interest of Western gas companies (Högselius, 2013, 105).

In support of this argument, at the beginning of 1969, the Warsaw Pact released its strategy for long-term peace in Europe – the Budapest appeal (Pravda, 1969), according to which cooperation in the area of infrastructure was regarded as foundation of Euro-Soviet cooperation in the field. Shortly afterwards, a commencement of natural gas talks between the Soviet Union and West Germany was announced, despite the fact that in the Budapest appeal, the Soviet bloc explicitly criticised West Germany's refusal to recognise East Germany and the post-war European borders (Högselius, 2013, 106). Even more surprisingly, a deal for the supply of gas was reached between the two countries a few months later – on 1 February 1970 (Högselius, 2013, 125). Soon after the agreements on exports of the “red gas” to other Western European countries followed.

4.3. The 1970s: The Decade of the Deepening Dependence of European States from Soviet Gas.

The 1970s was a period of considerable negotiations and contracts between the Soviet Union and several other European countries. The new contracts accelerated the Soviet pipeline business with the West, with deliveries of the natural gas from USSR to West and East Germany commencing in 1973, Italy in 1974, and France in 1976 (Kaijser et al., 2015 p.89-90). In addition, by 1973, Belgium, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland were in negotiations with the Soviet side (Högselius, 2013, 132-133). As a results between 1970 and 1980 deliveries of Soviet gas to Western Europe grew exponentially from 3.4Bcm to 26Bcm (Stern, 2003, p.1)

It could be argued that the increased rate of successful contracts and negotiations could be attributed to the success of, by then already operational, Austrian deal, the influence of the quest for legitimacy of the Soviet Union following its invasion of Czechoslovakia and the deal with West Germany, which, amongst other things, demonstrated how the most fundamental political differences and legacy could be forsaken in the name of economic benefits.

In addition, a crucial moment which facilitated the export of the natural gas of Soviet Union to Europe were the shockwaves sent across the continent by the oil embargo imposed on the United States and several European countries in 1973 by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The oil embargo met the momentum of rapid industrial growth in Soviet Union through the 1970s, which spilled over to large-scale projects in its natural gas industry in the light of the increased demand for this type of commodity. The actions of OPEC may be seen as a “watershed moment” since it resulted in the new understanding of the vulnerability of energy dependence from the Middle East and considerable risks it involved. This in turn gave the European economies the needed rationalisation of buying Soviet natural gas, which at that time was seen as a good substitute to oil, and thus reducing their energy dependence on the “now uncertain imports from the Middle East” (Goldman 2008, 47).

Whilst it is reasonable to claim that both détente and the global energy crises of the early 1970s served as driving forces behind East-West cooperation in the energy field, as Perovic

& Krempin (2014, pp.114-115) argue, it was ultimately the Soviet own escalating "energy crisis" that urged the leaders to seek for the closer relations with the West.

For the Soviet Union the first half of 1970s was marked by the decline in production in its old production fields. Meanwhile in April 1975, in attempts to diversify away from Arab oil as well as to decrease the share of oil in their overall energy mix, Europeans concluded a "switch deal" between Iran, the USSR, and German company Ruhrgas - a core negotiator representing consortium of several European energy companies (Högselius, 2013, pp.172-179). The deal was concerned with import of Iranian gas to Soviet Union with the latter shipping the same amount of gas to Europe from its own deposits (ibid.) However, it was not to be materialized since further to the Islamic Revolution in early 1979 the new Iranian government unilaterally annulled the contract thus terminating deliveries of gas to the Soviet Union altogether (Perovic & Krempin (2014, p.138).

For the Soviets at that time the need for development of gas fields in the resource-rich northern part of Western Siberia together with corresponding transport infrastructure gained momentum, if only Kremlin was continue to meet its growing domestic energy consumption and energy export obligations, in the light of already concluded large deals, to Comecon allies and the West European partners as well as enhance its position as a global energy player. Having said that it was also clear that any expansion of gas sector required both better machinery and extensive capital investment.

Thus Soviet rapprochement with the West was driven and sustained by an understanding on the part of the Kremlin leadership the need for Western support in terms of financial investment and technological assistance (Perovic & Krempin (2014, p.121).

4.4. The 1980s: The Construction of the Export Infrastructure.

During 1980s, it became evident that natural gas will be the focal point of the Soviet investment policy in the following decades (Gustafson 1983, p.1). In fact, it may be argued that the Iranian crisis faced the Soviet energy policy with crucial solutions towards preventing the precarious dynamics of having a third-party dependence in its contractual gas supply obligations to Europe. Kremlin set the goal of increasing the output of natural gas by 50 per cent in five years in view of its prioritization for providing the bulk of the increase of

national energy output as well as turning the gas exports into the largest hard currency income above all required to maintain the Union's import capacity (ibid.).

Following some intense negotiations, in 1981 an agreement in principle was reached between the USSR and representatives from Western European energy companies and financial institutions on building a major export pipeline for deliveries of Siberian gas directly from the fields in Tiumen to consumers in Europe. As Perovic & Krempin (2014, p.115) point out, this agreement was crucial in paving the way for the East-West energy interdependence that determines relations between Russia and Europe up to the present day.

With significant resources for the development of deposits in West Siberia readily allotted under the new five-year plan, by mid 1980s, Siberian gas fields were supplying over half of national output, turning Soviet Union into "world's biggest natural gas producer" (Gazprom, History of the Russian Gas Branch). The largest share of this output was coming from the immense reserves of Urengoy gas field in North-West Siberia. This correspondingly raised a need for creation of infrastructure that would allow securing timely and continuous deliveries to domestic and foreign markets. To that end in 1985 the Soviet Union commissioned construction of Unified Gas Supply System (UGSS) – a giant pipeline connecting Urengoy deposits to the rest of USSR and Western Europe.

It is reasonable to claim that the construction of UGSS may be viewed as a decisive moment in both successfully shifted dynamics of Soviet gas exports of that time and Russia's current status as leading world supplier of hydrocarbons (oil and natural gas). Likewise, the pipeline proved the reliability of the partnership to West Europe, which at that time grew increasingly comfortable to the Soviet energy dependence. It should also be noted that, by the end of 1980s, in the aftermath of the massive infrastructure investments, oil and gas accounted to 75 per cent of Soviet export earnings and thus became the most vital resource for the economy (Gustafson 1983, p.56).

4.5. The 1990-2000s: The Period of Gas Disruptions and Return of the Question of Energy Security.

Whilst it would be hard to find a clear evidence of politically motivated disruptions of gas supplies during the Soviet era, in 1990s, after the Soviet Union collapsed, conflicts and intentional disputes mainly with the newly formed transit countries made interruptions of gas

supplies common. For example, the gas supply of Lithuania was reduced by 80 per cent in March 1990, East Germany's gas supply was cut in the winter of 1991-1992, and Estonia's gas supplies were cut for four days in 1993 due to its failure to pay for earlier deliveries, and the like (Högselius, 2013, 204-206).

Nevertheless, major disruptions between Russia and Western Europe were prevented due to the existence of long-term contracts, which Russia decided not to abandon. In contrast, the lack of contracts between Russia and the transit countries, most of which were part of the Soviet Block, became an issue and a matter of great concern. The most serious of the disruptions to affect the West was the disruption of the supplies to the Ukraine in October 1992, when Russia's reduction of gas deliveries to the country resulted in Ukraine's decision to divert some of the gas intended for European export and use it domestically.

As of the beginning of the 21st century rapidly rising world energy prices in the light of increasing global demand and given the role of energy exports for Russian economy, ultimately resulted in unprecedented growth of the country's GDP almost twofold just within a space of a decade. As a result, 2000s has arguably seen the Russian state being gradually transformed into a so-called 'energy heavyweight' with energy and in particular gas production and exports becoming extremely important for country's position on the global arena.

At the same time, Russia President Putin's clear understanding of the fact that controlling Russia's natural resources translates into power resulted in his decision to implement a range of domestic policies aiming at consolidation of the energy sector under the state control with Kremlin making some forced acquisitions, particularly in relation to Russian oil and gas fields (Kefferputz, 2009, p.98). It should also be noted that with the accession of Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency at the end of 1999, Russian energy policy underwent a significant transformation also becoming more central to the state's foreign policy, which under Putin's rule got more economically orientated in itself.

Meantime, the 2000 Green Paper - Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply, published by European Commission highlighted the importance of geographic diversification of supply, but described Russia as a reliable partner (Aalto, 2016, p.47). However, it also portrayed a starkly realist message, which was that greater dependence on

Russian gas supplies was inevitable given the vast reserves located in that country (ibid.). In addition it may be reasonable to claim that the document marked the outbreak of the politicization process of security of gas supplies to the EU. Another important event that year was a launch of EU-Russia energy dialogue, which signalled an important step in the development of the EU-Russia energy relationship (Aalto & Westphal 2008, p.2-3).

It may be claimed that energy security has gained the status of the core matter of concern in political debates during the initial decade of the twenty-first century, with January 2006 seen as a turning point in EU-Russia energy relations with the issue of energy security starting to come into fore in the EU political agenda.

This is when troubled relations between Russia and Ukraine culminated in a new crisis, with supplies to Ukraine once again reduced and gas intended for export being diverted to the domestic Ukrainian market resulting in Central and Eastern European countries being hit by suspension of gas supplies (Stern, 2006, p.8). Following 30 years of stability of Russian/USSR gas supplies to the EU, in 2006 a dispute between Ukraine and Russia resulted in significant shortfall in supplies in some of the Union's member states.⁷ Eventually, the tension was resolved by negotiations, only to build up again and escalate in the most serious disruption faced by Europe in the winter of 2009 (Pirani, Stern and Yafimava 2009, p.4). The situation that was seen to confirm the claim that Russia makes use of its natural gas exportation as a political tool, a power mechanism aiming to increase its influence, especially in regards to the former Soviet Union countries (Houtari, 2011, p.121).

Despite this, the perception of Russia as a reliable partner largely endured until the most serious gas supply disruption occurred in January 2009. This is when yet another negotiations between Ukraine and Russia on the issue of gas trade broke down resulting in supply disruptions that lasted from January 1st to January 21st. The Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria suffered gas supply reductions of between 5 and 30 per cent, whilst the Slovakian government claimed that as the result of disruption the economy suffered damage to the sum of 0.5 per cent of GDP. It was argued that the Russian–Ukrainian ‘Gas War’ of January 2009 propelled the ‘securitization’ of European energy agenda to an all-times-high (Blakey & Gustafson, 2009, p.2).

⁷ Hungary (40 per cent), Austria, Slovakia and Romania (33 per cent), France (25–30 per cent) and Poland (14 per cent).

Interestingly, as noted by Keukeleire and Delreux (2014, p.) and as far as the legal perspective of the matter is concerned, it was also 2009 when EU energy policy was given a special legal basis. This happened with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty where its objective was stipulated in the Art.194(1) TFEU as to “ensure security of energy supply in the Union”. However, the same Article further clarified that any energy related measures originated on a supranational level “shall not affect a Member State’s right to determine the conditions for exploiting its energy resources, its choice between different energy sources and a general structure of its energy supply” Art.194(2) TFEU, thus leaving member states with a considerable degree of sovereignty in dealing with the issues.

4.6. Ukrainian Crisis 2013/2014 and its impact on EU-Russia relations in the field of energy trade.

Previous disputes between Russia and Ukraine during the so-called “Gas Wars” of 2006 and 2009, when Russia cut off gas to Ukraine for two weeks with knock-on effects for European states, and their implications for the European Union had arguably manifested the vulnerability of the EU to Russia’s moves to use its energy resources in political context. This means that even before the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 EU’s energy security concerns had been heightened significantly with some experts warning of the extent to which Russian use of the so-termed “energy weapon” could be part of a broader strategy to undermine European security and European public institutions (Lyutskanov et al., 2013, p.21). Likewise, some members of the EU suspected Kremlin’s intentions to make use of gas exports in bolstering Russia’s hard power whilst simultaneously weakening the EU to the extent that it becomes incapable of providing effective security beyond their present frontiers (ibid.).

Given the role energy trade plays in the EU-Russia relations by 2010 the balanced partnership between the two countries got already somewhat crippled, this is only to commence yet another period of escalating tensions, arguably the most severe since the end of the USSR. It may be argued that the Ukrainian crisis erupted in November 2013 lies at the heart of the issue. This is when Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich scuppered a pending EU association agreement aiming at closer trade ties with the Union and instead moved towards closer cooperation with Russia.

Since the opinion polls show a plurality in favour of the deal with the EU, Ukrainians reacted angrily on Yanukovych order to suspend the preparations for the historic pact between Kiev and Brussels and by December 2013 hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens were occupying the capital's city hall (BBC News, 2013). This all culminated in Maidan Revolution in February 2014, which saw President Yanukovych eventually ousted from power (Shveda and Park, p. 88). At this point protests erupted in Crimea, where a large part of the population are ethnic Russians and Russia intervened militarily to supposedly protect these its ethnic minority.

Subsequently, a referendum in Crimea was held in March 2014 where overwhelming number of voters showed their support for uniting the territory of Crimean peninsula with Russia and President Putin subsequently signed a treaty officially annexing Crimea to almost universal international condemnation (Trenin, 2014, p.6). Meantime, the presidential elections were held in Ukraine on 25 May 2014, which resulted in victory of Petro Poroshenko, who promised closer ties with the European Union (Shveda and Park, p. 90). That been said, following the annexation of Crimea and election of new president the political instability in Ukraine continued and Russian hostility towards a pro-EU Ukrainian government coupled with encouragement provided to Russian separatists in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine (Trenin, 2014 p.7). This arguably demonstrated that the situation went beyond being just political turmoil in Ukraine, but manifested itself as a contention between the East and West on the international scale.

Notably, for Ukraine the end of the Yanukovych regime and the subsequent turn towards the EU meant a rapid increase in the price of gas received from Russia together with Russian demands to immediately proceed with payments of real and alleged debts for the gas it supplied to Ukraine in the past. Such as, on 1 April 2014 Gazprom cancelled Ukraine's natural gas discount that the country was getting in line with the agreed between Putin and Yanukovych in December 2013 with the reason being a Ukraine's failure to settle its debt to the company that was stated by then to compound to \$4.5 billion (BBC News, 2014).

Soon after the natural gas price of \$268 per thousand cubic meters (tcm) under President Yanukovych has jumped to \$485 per tcm as Ukraine's new government took power, which represented an increase of approximately 80% (Lovelace 2017, p. 164-165). In addition,

Russia's state-owned Gazprom ordered Ukraine to pay upfront for its gas supplies. Ukraine steadfastly rejected to stomach the increased gas price and demanded a new gas contract, which led to Russia responding by cutting off natural gas supplies to Ukraine for non-payment of debts in June 2014 (Lovelace 2017, p. 165). As Lovelace points out, the circumstances surrounding this decision were certainly out of the ordinary, and in turn may have suggested that Russia was deliberately deploying its energy exports as a foreign policy tool. This is because firstly, such rapid price rises followed shortly after the annexation of Crimea were suspicious in themselves, especially in the light of historical evidence that shows that political developments in Ukraine have been correlated with a price received by the country for Russian gas. Secondly, a Russia's offered justification that the unprecedented price rise was based upon outstanding Ukrainian debts to Gazprom was also unconvincing, since such long-standing debts were common in Russia-Ukraine relations in the field of gas trade.

The role of the EU within the process is also important to consider, because it went from being in overall neutral observer of the conflict in 2006 and 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas disputes to emerging in the role of a mediator when it comes to Ukrainian gas crisis of 2014. This is because it was recognised that Europe's external energy security is linked to not only the EU's relations with energy exporting countries but is also influenced by [political] situation in states along the gas transmission network. Although Brussels got reassurance from both Moscow and Kiev that they will not intervene with natural gas intended for transfers to the European Union, European leaders could not assume that the Union's supplies would not be affected. This is because 2006 and 2009 Russia's gas cut-offs to Ukraine proved it difficult if not impossible to limit the effects of the crises to Ukraine along.

Consequentially, in 2014 Guenther Oettinger, as Vice-President of the European Commission took part in intense negotiations to end the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute and secured an agreement of a winter package that included staged repayment of Ukrainian debts to Gazprom, a lower Ukrainian gas price and promises of prompt new payment for gas from Ukraine (Van de Graaf et al., 2016, p.474). This injected a new tripartite balance into Russian-Ukrainian gas disputes and underscored the urgency that the EU attaches to issues of energy security (ibid.). Although it has to be noted that, since the Nord Stream pipeline became operational in 2012, only half of Russian gas exports to Europe transited through

Ukrainian territory, lessening the potential impact of Russian-Ukrainian gas disputes (European Parliament, 2015).

Nevertheless, the disputes between Russia and Ukraine of 2006 and, in particular, 2009 and their respective outcomes for the security of energy supply to the EU coupled with the events in Ukraine of 2014 negatively effected the state of play of EU-Russia relations in the field. Likewise, the extent to which diversification has been hailed as a policy priority suggests that a considerable degree of securitization has taken place in relation to this issue (Belyi, 2015, p.121). In attempts to deal with its arguable energy insecurity the European Union has taken steps towards reducing the region's vulnerability to Russian energy control. It is in this context that in May 2014 the Commission's Energy Security Strategy highlighted that the EU remains vulnerable to external energy shocks and set out a series of actions to address this concern. Of particular note here is the February 2015 Energy Union project⁸, aiming at "diversifying Europe's sources of energy and ensuring energy security through solidarity and cooperation between EU countries as well as the October 2014 Gas Stress Tests to check the EU's ability to handle a potential supply interruptions of Russian gas transported through Ukraine (European Commission 2014).

⁸ European Commission's webpage on Energy Union and Climate
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/energy-union-and-climate_en

5. SECURITIZATION DISCOURSES IN THE EU-RUSSIA ENERGY RELATIONS.

As it was already suggested elsewhere in the present text both the 2006 and 2009 Russian-Ukrainian Gas Crises, which affected the energy supply to some EU member states, appeared to be events altering the EU-Russia relations in the field of energy trade.

The words of then EU Energy Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, from his speech in 2006 further to the first major Ukraine-Russia gas dispute may be seen as a good reference to that new framing:

...over the past year we have seen the issue of *security of energy* supply become the issue of international relations.....Whereas previously the issue of *security of supply* was a technical issue reserved for the very specialised engineer or system operator, now the issue of *energy security* is on the table of every energy minister, as well as foreign, finance and industry ministers across Europe (Piebalgs 2006).

This in turn led to the situation where the topic of energy security in the context of EU-Russia partnership has gradually ceased its status of a matter of ordinary political debates becoming an issue transferred into high politics domain.

In another words, the anxiety of energy dependence coupled with distrust in each other's reliability gradually fostered the process where both of the actors started to securitize the issue of energy in the manner of furthering their own foreign policy interests. In other words, energy has become assigned with the status of existential threats, and thus, political rather than economic dimensions of energy in EU-Russia relations have become significantly more considered (Özcan, 2013, p.12). It may be argued that in the context of 2014 Ukrainian Crisis the threat perceptions of both of the actors about their respective energy securities gained even more prominence with the issue brought to the very core of political debates.

5.1 Analysis of the content of The EU's Energy Securitization Discourses on Russian Federation 2014-2017.

The analysis revealed several key discourse themes in regards to EU's relations with Russia in the context of the Union's security of energy supply. Firstly, there is the discourse on EU

having energy agency; next there is a discourse on the reliability of Russia as the present and future energy partner to the EU; thirdly the analysis revealed a discourse about concerns expressed in relation to Russian use of its gas exports to attain to the state's foreign policy objectives; finally the analysis identified a strong presence of the discourse on diversification of routes, sources and suppliers; finally there is a discourse on the role of Ukraine as a transit country for natural gas supplies to Europe. Further in this sub-chapter the author provides with analysis of speeches, interviews and statements of key European political figures on basis on which the above named discourse themes were identified.

The analysis of selected dataset demonstrate that the EU is largely identifies itself as quoted by Cañete (2015) “the biggest energy importer in the world” (also Šefčovič 2015b, 2016b, 2017), whereas it was highlighted that the Union is “spending over one billion euros a day on its energy supply” (Šefčovič 2015a). It was also acknowledged that the Union has plans to further increase “EU's weight in global energy markets” Šefčovič (2015), with the relevance to this point Cañete (2015a; also Ušackas 2016a) indicated a “the decline in [our] domestic production of fossil fuels”, which may be seen as an explanatory factor for the need to increase in the future Union's imports of certain energy commodities.

In connection to the role of energy in the EU-Russia partnership the European politicians admit that “energy plays a pivotal role in our relations with Russia, and Russia plays an important role in our energy policy” (Šefčovič 2015; also Ušackas 2016, 2017b). Nevertheless, it has also been pointed out on the decrease of trust between the two parties to the point where “for the EU side managing the relationship [with Russia] represents a key strategic challenge” (Ušackas 2017b; also Barroso 2014). In connection to reasons blamed for this situation to occur it was noted that “Russia's actions in Ukraine have seriously harmed the EU-Russia relationship” (Ušackas 2015b). However, in the light of all tensions there is a willingness of the European Union to re-establish its relations with Russia. In this regards, Ušackas (2015a) stated that “we are interested in liquidation of irritants and discrepancies in our relations” and “would like to see Russia as a reliable supplier of natural gas in future” (Cañete 2015; also Ušackas 2015b, 2016; Juncker 2016).

Therefore, the discourses point out on European politicians admitting the need to come to an arrangement that would allow the EU to peacefully coexist with Russia in the international arena, a so-called “modus vivendi” (Šefčovič 2015). This, all other things equal, is due to the

general belief about the countries being “too interdependent to live in isolation” (Šefčovič 2015; also Barroso 2014; Ušackas 2017b). Having said that, it was also noted that any relations in between the two in the future will not be “a return to "business as usual", but rather a creation of a "new normal" (Ušackas 2016).

As far as the EU-Russia relations in the area of gas trade are concerned, the European political rhetoric show a considerable degree of recognition of the Union’s dependence on Russia’s gas exports, with Cañete (2015a; also Günther H. Oettinger 2014; Šefčovič 2015b) asserting that “for gas, we import a third of what we use from Russia”. That being said, some concerns have been voiced in regards to overreliance of some member states, in particular those of Central and Eastern Europe, on Russian gas exports. Such an overreliance was in turn seen to endanger the stability of energy supply for the European Union as a whole. On this matter it was noted that some “European countries depend on Russian gas exports for significant proportions of their energy needs (Malmström 2015; also Barroso 2014; Juncker 2016; Šefčovič 2015b; Ušackas 2016a). Correspondingly, in the light of strained relations in between two partners it was highlighted that “energy security is of particular importance given [our] dependence on Russian gas” (Ušackas 2017).

Likewise, it was acknowledged that, “energy security has become a political concern at regional, national, and European levels” (Šefčovič 2015a; also Oettinger 2014). As to reasoning for such a situation to occur, it was stressed that this, most notably took place “due to the energy-related concerns resulting from the current tensions between Russia and Ukraine.” (Oettinger 2014; also Šefčovič 2015b; Cañete 2015a; Barroso 2014).

In the similar vein in the wake of Ukrainian crisis it was asserted that, “a resilient internal energy market will help us combat the illegitimate use of energy as a political tool” (Šefčovič 2015). There is some further evidence found in EU’s energy securitization discourses where Russian energy trade is believed to have political motivation with the country’s intentional use of its “energy weapon” in order to achieve its wider strategic foreign policy objectives. Such as Ušackas (2017; also 2017a; Malmström 2015) stated that, the Union “[we] must be wary of Russian attempts to use business interests to split and weaken the EU”, thus when it comes to energy security “don’t put your fate in the hand of autocratic regimes” (Cañete 2015a).

Having said that, with the reference to Ukraine as the major corridor for Russian natural gas exports to Europe, the discourses of key Europeans leaders over the years of 2014-2017 show a substantial degree of support towards the country, which according to Šefčovič (2016) “continues to be a reliable gas partner and transit country”. In regards to the future role of Ukraine as a transit country for deliveries of Russian gas into Europe, it was stated in considerable number of occasions that, despite all economic and political challenges the country has been going through, Brussels “actively supports efforts to ensure that Ukraine...will remain a stable and reliable transit route.” (Cañete 2015; also Šefčovič 2015, 2015a, 2017a). As an explanation for such EU’s position taken in relation to the issue it was asserted, that “it is in the interest of all parties that Ukraine remains a significant gas transit corridor.” (Šefčovič 2015; also Ušackas 2016).

It may be argued that the European energy securitization rhetoric demonstrates that worries in regards to Union’s energy security when it comes to Russian gas supplies were made with the reference to events in Ukraine of 2013/2014 and on the back of the outcomes of 2006 and 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas disputes. This is when the EU’s energy security appeared to be hostage of strained relations in between Kiev and Moscow. When in 2006 as well as 2009 Russia invoked gas supply cuts to Ukraine, this also left energy stranded some of the Union’s Eastern and Southern European member states, whose gas imports from Russia were transported through the territory of Ukraine. Fuelled by fears rested on experiences from the recent past, the eruption of 2014 Russia-Ukraine crisis made European leaders anxious about natural gas interruptions. Meantime, for political reasons, Brussels largely blocked any EU-Russia formal interactions.

Such as, with the reference to Europe (over)reliance on Russia’s gas exports, Cañete (2015a; also Šefčovič 2016a) suggested that the “crisis in Ukraine has shown just how vulnerable this dependence makes us”. Whereas in connection to the EU brokering the conclusion of October 2014 “Winter Package” agreement for the deliveries of Russian gas to Ukraine in upcoming winter season Šefčovič (2015c) asserted that “we are tired of being worried every summer if we would have enough energy in the winter”.

To that end in order to mitigate the energy security implications of the Union’s dependence on Russian gas exports Cañete (2015, 2016) was calling for “putting an end to overdependence on a single supplier or route”. Likewise, Šefčovič (2017) noted that “the

more sources of supply are available, the more secure and resilient our supply becomes”. Whereas, in the view of European reliance on Russian natural gas supplies it was widely stated that, as far as the EU energy security is concerned, “diversification of energy sources, suppliers and routes are crucial for ensuring secure and resilient energy supplies to European citizens and companies” (Šefčovič 2016, 2015, 2015b; also Cañete 2015a; Juncker 2016; Oettinger 2014; Ušackas 2016, 2017a). It has to be noted that diversification of sources, routes and partners aimed at reduction of the role of Russia natural gas in the EU’s energy mix can also be found amongst declared objectives of the Energy Union and the related European Energy Security Strategy.

When it comes to acquisition of access to alternative gas supplies the energy securitization discourse of the EU in years 2014-2017 is especially focused on the need for advancement of the Southern Gas Corridor, which is perceived to be a project falling within the EU's energy security priorities. The Southern Gas Corridor is one of the most notable initiatives of the European Commission aimed to reduce Europe's dependency on Russian gas by contributing to diversity of sources and routes of security of energy supply. The route from Caspian and Middle Eastern regions to Europe consist of three individual pipeline projects the South Caucasus Pipeline, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline, and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline⁹.

In connection with the matter Cañete (2015a; also Šefčovič 2015, 2016b; Barroso 2014) pointed out that “The Southern Corridor project [will] be a top priority”, whereas Šefčovič (2016) stated that, the project is needed “in order to decrease existing dependencies on individual suppliers”.

It may be claimed that much reasoning behind the EU’s intentions to accelerate the Southern Gas Corridor to be found in desire to eliminate the dependence of EU countries, particularly those of Central and South East Europe, on a single [Russian] supplier for most or all of their natural gas. This, in light of consequences of 2006 and 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas crises is subsequently seen to decrease risks associated with potential instabilities of Russian natural gas supplies.

⁹ Information taken from the European Commission web page at <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-security/diversification-of-gas-supply-sources-and-routes>

In addition, in line with the EU's energy diversification of source commitment, the discourses of political leaders show believes for the need to develop a fully-pledged Liquefied Natural Gas strategy. This is because in the view of Ušackas (2016a; also Šefčovič 2015, 2016a) "LNG market is central to ensuring the energy security of the EU". Most notably, in this instance all eyes have been on the increasing LNG production in the US and the prospects of EU-US cooperation in the field to help match the EU gas needs. To that end Šefčovič (2017b) asserted that he " [I] see American gas as a tremendous opportunity to diversify our gas imports".

It may be argued that a considerable degree of attention in the EU's energy securitization discourse has been drawn to Nord Stream 2 - the controversial Russian-German pipeline project, which generated some notably vocal opposition in some EU member states of Central and Eastern Europe whilst also being in the front burner in the European Parliament and the European Commission. Much of political rhetoric was made with the reference to adverse impact of the project on the European energy security and the EU's energy diversification strategy in the context of the Energy Union. Such as it was stressed that, "the Nord Stream 2 project does not comply with EU energy objectives on diversification, which has at its core the diversification of suppliers, routes and sources of natural gas" (Ušackas 2017a).

According to European political representatives, Nord Stream 2 "could lead to decreasing gas transportation corridors" and "such a reduction of routes would not improve security of supply" (Šefčovič 2016). In addition there were some fears expressed about the route being detrimental for the EU's push for greater energy independence and more diversified supplies in line with the strategic goal to reduce its reliance on Russian gas, as, once operational, it would "further increase the dominance of Gazprom in the western European gas market" (Cañete 2016a; also Šefčovič 2016).

5.2. Analysis of the content of Russia's Energy Securitization Discourses on the European Union 2014-2017.

The analysis revealed several key discourse themes in regards to Russia's relations with the European Union in the context of the energy security. Firstly, there is a discourse on Russia's role as an energy great power; secondly, the analysis revealed the presence of discourse of

Russia being a reliable energy partner to its European counterpart; next there is a discourse on Russia's mistrust towards Brussels where EU leaders are also blamed for taking "overpolitisized" approach to energy trade; then there is a discourse on Russia's new pipeline projects and the country's role of the guarantor of the European energy security; next there is a discourse on diversification of Russia's energy partners; finally the analysis revealed a discourse on Ukraine as a main transit country for Russia's natural gas to Europe. Further in this sub-chapter the author provides with analysis of speeches, interviews and statements of key Russian political leaders on basis on which the above named discourse themes were identified.

The analysis of the content of securitization discourses suggest that Russia identifies itself as an important supplier of fossil fuels to European Union, with Lavrov (2014b) asserting that "Europe will be unable to manage without Russian gas in the long-term" and Medvedev (2014a; also emphasised by Putin 2016c) pointing out that "a substantial portion of energy is supplied to Europe from Russia".

The analyzed material show that Russia does acknowledge the presence of interdependence between itself as an energy exporter and the EU as an energy importer, claiming that "if we supply gas and invest billions of dollars in our deposits and pipelines, we are depending on Europe to buy our gas, just as Europe depends on gas from Russia" (Medvedev 2015, 2016b). Having said that, it was pointed out that the "cooperation has undoubted advantages for both sides"(Lavrov 2014b, 2017a; also Novak 2016).

Although, when it comes to significance of Russian gas supply for the European Union, Lavrov (2017) denies a claim about European arguable overly dependence on supplies of Russian gas, pointing out that "Russian gas on the European market is absolutely comparable to that supplied by Norway". As far as the future of the EU-Russia energy relations is concerned, Lavrov (2015) points out that, "Russia will remain Europe's key energy supplier for the foreseeable future". One of the reasons for this is seen in the sustainable competitiveness of the country's gas exports because there is "no cheaper [...] supplier than Russia, and there won't be any in the near future" (Putin 2014; also Novak 2014). In addition it was explicitly stated about "decreasing internal supplies" of gas in Europe (Medvedev 2016b, 2015a; Novak 2015b) along with the "growing gas consumption" (Lavrov 2016e; also Novak 2016), all of which is likely to result in the need to increase natural gas supplies

from external source. Whilst any talks of Western Europe moving away from Russian gas supplier was perceived “absolutely abstract or politicised in nature.” (Medvedev 2014b; also Novak 2014a). It has to be noted that in this instance there was a lot of scepticism expressed in relation to EU’s vision to be able to diversify away from Russia’s natural gas through making contracts for the supply of LNG from the US.

That being said, Russia in itself is seeking to retain and strengthen its cooperation with the EU in the energy field. In accordance to Medvedev (2015) Russia would like to “continue to supply gas to Europe in large volumes” with the view to “further develop [our] energy cooperation with the EU” (Medvedev 2015a, 2016a; also Putin 2016b). Moreover, in this context, the rhetoric of Russian policymakers suggest a strong evidence of firm believes, manifested in a numerous occasions, that Russia “has always been a reliable supplier of oil and gas” (Lavrov 2016a; also 2015, 2016b; Putin 2014 and Medvedev 2014a, 2015a; Novak 2014a) and “[we] have never failed to meet [our] obligations” (Medvedev 2015). In this instance, the historical significance of EU-Russia energy cooperation has also been noted with Medvedev (2015; also Novak 2015) asserting, that Russia has been “selling gas to Europe for decades” and, in fact, “without any interruption for nearly 50 years now” (Putin 2016c; also Lavrov 2014b).

In connection to that, energy securitization discourse of Russian Federation in years 2014-2017 demonstrate a clear realization from the side of Russian politicians that “Russia-EU relations are not at their best” (Medvedev 2015, 2016b; also Lavrov 2015, 2014b), with some notable regrets being expressed for such a situation to occur.

That being said, there is an understanding shown in political discussions in Russia that this situation needs to be reverted for benefits of all parties involved, such as Lavrov (2014a, 2014b and Putin 2014a) notes that “Russia and the EU are natural partners and both stand to gain with ever closer contacts” and according to Medvedev (2014a) “we will keep our focus on mutually beneficial cooperation” because “we value our European partners very much.” (Medvedev 2014b; also Novak 2015) and Russia “[it] will always guarantee Europe’s energy security” (Medvedev 2015a) with Lavrov (2016c) arguing that Russia “[we] can find solutions that will suit everyone”. In connection with that Lavrov (2016a) showed regrets that “despite the European Commission’s many proposals to resume a full dialogue on energy,

which have been made over the past two years, Brussels' intentions have yet to materialise"(Lavrov 2016a, 2016b).

The energy securitization discourses suggest about Russian efforts to diversification of its energy efforts both in terms new routes, extension of customers' base as well as products structure. In this regards the main attention has been drawn to facilitation of natural gas deliveries to Europe through alternative routes namely Nord Stream 2 as well as TurkStream that emerged as a replacement project upon formal cancelation of South Stream pipeline construction.

South Stream was a project to transport natural gas from Russia offshore through the Black Sea and continue ashore through Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia and further to Austria. The pipeline project was announced on 23 June 2007 and construction of its onshore facilities started in December 2012. However, the South Stream project was abandoned by Russia in December 2014, with European Parliament's resolution opposing the pipeline construction and when European Commission suddenly voiced it being in breach of the Union's competition and energy legislation, in particular the Third Energy Package. It needs to be noticed that the decision to cancel South Stream came at a time of increased diplomatic tensions between Russia and the EU and few rounds restrictive measures adopted by the EU against Russia further to its annexation of Crimea in March 2014.

Despite the project cancellation by Russia in December 2014 Putin (2015; 2016a) argued that, "we were ready to implement it, but they simply would not let us." There is some strong rhetoric present in speeches, interviews and statements of Russian politician that bad political decision-making made in Brussels is to be blamed for the situation to occur with significant critic expressed in regards to EU's stance in dealing with the Project. Such as, according to Medvedev (2015) the South Stream "has fallen victim to Brussels bureaucracy" with Lavrov (2014b) claiming that "this was done contrary to the interests of Europeans themselves." This is because in the view of Russian politicians South Stream was "crucial for European energy security." (Lavrov 2014a, also Putin 2014a; Medvedev 2014). As it was noted that "diversifying logistics is economically efficient and beneficial for Europe and promotes its security" (Putin 2014b) and according to Lavrov (2014b) the project would have allowed "to minimise transit risks arising in the path of Russian gas deliveries to consumers in the EU", which was something that Russia perceived to be "in full conformity with Brussels' European

energy security goals.”(Lavrov 2014b).

As for the Turkstream project, it needs to be mentioned that it has been generally regarded as replacement of South Stream pipeline efforts with Russia-Turkey intergovernmental agreement signed in October 2016. The pipeline construction started in May 2017 and completed in November 2018 with the purpose to bring Russian gas to the European part of Turkey under the Black Sea with the view to further building a second pipeline leg to Serbia, Hungary to either Greece or Bulgaria and further to European soil. Likewise, in the case with its predecessor, Russia securitization discourse shows a strong belief that with the route in full operation “Europe’s energy security will be guaranteed.” (Medvedev 2015).

However, in the case with Turkstream project discourses also revealed a high degree of mistrust expressed by Russian politicians towards Brussels and Russia urging for reassurance that there will be no moves from the side of the EU to halt its implementation with claims made that “only if we have explicit official guarantees in writing to allow this project to be built.” (Putin 2015; also Lavrov 2016a).

Yet another recent pipeline project that finds a lot of references in Russia’s securitization discourses is Nord Stream 2, which according to Lavrov (2017, 2016e, 2016b) “[it] is designed to significantly reduce transit risks, improve the EU’s energy security and as Putin stated (2017a) “absolutely evident that [it] is in the interests of the European economy”. Notably, in this instance the link was made to already operational Nord Stream 1 project, that Russia believes “has improved Europe’s energy security.” (Medvedev 2016a, also 2016b). Russian politicians explicitly denied any state involvement in the project with Lavrov (2016c; also Putin 2016) stating that “Nord Stream-2 is not a Russian initiative.... one that doesn’t have any political background.”. In contrast claims were made about the project being of a “pure commercial nature” (Putin 2016; also Lavrov 2016e; Novak 2015b).

With the reference to certain challenges related to implementation of the project it was argued that it had fallen victim of certain Russophobic sentiments expressed by some of the EU member states, such as Medvedev (2016a; also Novak 2016; Lavrov 2017) asserted that “Nord Stream-2 is another example of a project that is important and yet politicised.” In this regards, claims were made that Russia “[we] hope that Brussels will be guided by pragmatic, not politicised considerations.” (Lavrov 2016; 2016b, 2016c).

In overall it can be argued that Russian politicians perceive that the construction of alternative gas delivery routes will not only support Russia's energy security strategy but will also be beneficial for the European energy security. According to Lavrov (2017b) these "gas pipeline projects, which aim to strengthen Europe's energy security" And, according to Putin (2016a) "would improve the reliability of supplies and, therefore, European energy security as a whole". Likewise, Russia's political rhetoric shows believes "that common sense will prevail in Europe and our gas projects will be implemented, because these are commercial projects of mutual benefit to Europe and to Russia" (Medvedev 2017, 2014; also Lavrov 2017a).

Also the securitization discourses reveal that as part of its diversification strategy Russia is seeking to "expand the energy exports list..... by increasing [our] presence in new fast-growing markets, primarily, the Asia-Pacific region" (Medvedev 2015b; 2016a; also Novak 2015a), which is largely regarded as an area of opportunities that, on the basis of commercial logic, should not be missed. That said, it has also been highlighted, that "this is not shifting our emphasis or changing the cooperation vector" (Medvedev 2015), and "gas distribution to China will not detract from our cooperation with Europe." (Medvedev 2015; 2015b; also Novak 2014a). In this regard, it was noted that, Russia's intentions to develop its energy relations with China is guided by pragmatic approach towards the region, where, according to Putin (Putin 2016), Russia will "continue pursuing attractive opportunities, mainly based on economic parameters".

Moreover, in the view of Russian politicians the unreliability of transit countries is seen to be a threat to security of the Russian gas exports to Europe, with Lavrov (2014b) arguing that it is "gas transit countries, rather than Russia, were to be blamed for disrupted deliveries". In this instance, according to Russian leaders Ukraine is a special example of a "problematic country" (Medvedev 2016b) as well as "unpredictable and unreliable gas transit partner" (Novak 2017) that jeopardizes the security of Russian gas supply to its European consumers. In addition, it has to be noted that with the reference to 2006 and 2009 crisis, which resulted in problems to natural gas supply to Europe, Russia largely sees itself as well as the EU being victims of Ukrainian domestic politics. Such as, according to Putin (2016) "it came down to their demand that we drop the price to the lowest rate and offer Ukraine a non-market rate, or they will shut down transit. They will just cut it off."

In the similar manner Russian leaders are explicitly show themselves in denial of any politization of its gas relations with Ukraine with, for example Putin (2014a; also Medvedev 2016b) claiming, that Russia was “forced to interrupt gas supplies to Ukraine last June because the Kiev authorities refused to pay for the gas supplies they had already received” and “we do not have any political goals when it comes to gas transit through Ukraine.” (Putin 2017). However, whilst discourses suggest that diversification of transport routes is perceived to be the most feasible solution to mitigate potential transit risks as “there is a fear that Ukraine will try to compensate its national natural gas shortage with gas intended for transit to European customers”(Novak 2016a), there are no clear plans so far to take Ukraine completely out of Russian gas business. In this regards, Putin (2015) asserted that he is “not sure this should be done – cut off transit through Ukraine.”

Despite the on-going tensions with the EU on a supranational level, Russia evidently managed to maintain a good energy trading relations on the level of the Union’s member states, thus pursuing its strategic interests in the sector predominantly through bilateral talks. Therefore it may be argued that as much as the Energy Dialogue has been frozen between Russia and the EU, this, however, has not prevented Kremlin from maintaining partnerships in the field with individual EU countries, namely Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Hungary, Greece, Italy.

In this context, the analysis of the texts revealed some steady intentions from Russian side to strengthen its gas trading positions on European market, with readiness, according to Putin (2016b), “to consider any project regardless of the context of political relations with any European nation”, it was also claimed that the construction of gas transport infrastructure “[it] is a purely economic matter, above all, a matter of economic expediency. No routes can be ruled out here.” (Putin 2017).

5.3. Comparison of the EU’s and Russian Federation’s Respective Energy Securitization Discourses 2014-2017.

The analysis of respective political rhetoric of Russian Federation and the European Union for the years 2014-2017 revealed certain key energy securitization discourse theme. These suggest about certain degree of convergence although in the face of considerable divergence in perceptions pertaining to interpretations of their mutual energy ties as well as perceptions

on each other and the role of each other in the international arena, when it comes to the matter of the energy trade.

At first consideration, it is evident from the examined dataset that both Russia and the EU identify themselves as important energy market players whilst also acknowledging the significance and importance of their energy cooperation. Likewise, the discourses show that the energy partnership is in general considered to be mutually beneficial by both of the parties concerned.

That being said, the discourses revealed a substantial divergence in how Russia sees itself and the way the country is perceived by Brussels when it comes to EU-Russia relations in the energy sphere and Russia's role for the Union in the context of security of natural gas supply.

Such as, Russia sees itself as a reliable supplier of natural gas to Europe, in this instance with references made to both the historical and contemporary contexts as well as to prospective future of the energy trade in between the two. Moreover, Russian political rhetoric claims about the country being responsible partner to Europe whose decision-making in the field of energy trade is based on pure economic considerations. Thus, Russia politicians stay largely in denial of any intentions to use the natural gas trade as a political tool in order to achieve the state's foreign policy objectives.

On the contrary, EU discourses demonstrate that European political leaders express substantial degree of mistrust in regards to reliability of Russia as natural gas supplier. In this instance with worries predominantly stemming from experiences of 2006 and 2009 Russo-Ukrainian gas disputes. Likewise, the EU's energy securitization rhetoric suggests about concerns being voiced in relation to Russia's willingness to exert its geopolitical power through the sale of its natural gas resources. On this issue much of European political leaders' attention drawn to Eastern and Central European member state most of which are reliant on natural gas deliveries from Russia for substantial fraction of their energy needs, with some being dependent on Russian gas on a single source of supply basis. To that end, in accordance to analyzed material, calls were being made for the need to mitigate any potential energy security implications of the Union's that may derive from such European overdependence on Russian source of gas exports.

Most notably, both of the partners acknowledge the deterioration of their relations and rising degree of mistrust in between the two actors. In connection to the issue Russian political rhetoric express beliefs that the situation emerged due to certain unconstructive decisions made in Brussels. Importantly, it was emphasized that by conducting itself in such a manner the Union leaders are acting against their own strategic interests. Moreover, it was stated that a Russophobic stance towards cooperation taken by some of the EU member states is also to be blamed for the situation to occur.

Having said that, European energy securitization discourses view Europe falling victim of Russia's politization of its energy trade with uncertainties in regards to stability of energy supplies causing distress in the relations between the two. In connection to this it was noted that the 2014 crisis in Ukraine and the country's political and economic disagreements with Russia brought the matter to the fore of the European political agenda, contributing to the issue of energy being transferred into the security domain.

Whereas there is an evidence found in the statements, interviews and speeches of both Russian and European politicians suggesting about the mutual desire to re-establish relations in between the two, it may equally be argued that there is a certain degree of divergence present as to sentiments each of the party show in relation to the matter.

Such as, Russian energy securitization rhetoric points out on the country's readiness to continue being a reliable energy partner of the EU in the foreseeable future. In this context, Russian political leaders state about the gains from cooperation for the country's own energy security, whilst also highlighting competitiveness of Russia's pipeline gas for European consumers in comparison to natural gas from other sources of alternative fuel, for example, in the form of LNG. Moreover, the examined dataset reveal that Russia sees itself being capable and willing to contribute to the European security of energy supply, with discourses also underlining the benefits of the cooperation for each of the parties involved.

Although speeches, interviews and statements of European political leaders from the analysed dataset suggest that European political leaders also show intentions to restore the Union's relations with Russia, the reasoning behind this desire somewhat differs. Such as such intentions are predominantly grounded of believes that the EU and Russia are too interdependent in their energy trading ties and thus, given this nature of relations in between

the two, their cooperation cannot be terminated overnight. Therefore, discourses of European politicians acknowledge the need for Brussels to coordinate its relations with Kremlin in a way that would allow for balanced coexistence, although admittedly in the new political realities in which the two will have to operate.

Likewise, according to energy securitization discourses there is a divergence in opinions in between the parties in relation to views pertaining to the role of Ukraine as transit corridor for deliveries of Russian natural gas to Europe. In the view of Russian leaders Ukraine should be seen as a stark illustration of a problematic country that endangers the security of Russian gas supply to its European counterpart. Whilst Russian discourse do not show evidence about Russian political leaders favouring the closure of the route all together it is widely believed that the role of Ukraine for the Russian gas transit has to be decreased.

In contrast, energy securitization discourses of European leaders express believes that the transit of Russian gas through Ukraine plays substantial role for the Europe energy supply. Thus maintaining a stable gas transit through this route is perceived to be important in the context of the EU's energy security.

It has to be noted that, in the context of EU energy securitization discourses, Nord Stream 2 has come under fire for raising dependence on a single supply source on the top of increasing the reliance on one route. The analysed texts explicitly state that once in operation the route will strengthen the EU energy dependence of Russia rather than decreasing it as prescribed by diversification of energy sources, suppliers and routes objective. As a result European politicians express beliefs of it, as well as others Russia initiated pipeline projects, being detrimental for the European energy security of supply.

In contrast, with the reference to the issue, Russian discourses show conviction that new pipeline projects, and in particular Nord Stream 2, will reinforce EU energy security. Such as, in the view of Russian politicians the construction of alternative gas delivery routes will not only support Russia's energy security strategy but will also be beneficial for the European energy security as a whole. As a result, Russian energy securitization discourses suggest about political leaders urging Brussels to reconsider its politicized approach to the issue and to change its position in regards to Russia's new infrastructure projects sticking to promises it had given in the past.

In overall, it has to be noted about Russia's positive perception of its energy cooperation with Europe with much of the hopes expressed that both of the partners will manage to come back in good terms with one another. There is an evidence found in the Russian energy securitization discourses to suggest about political leaders attempts to de-securitize the issue of energy in the context of the country's relations with the EU as its partnership with the Union is perceived to fulfill both Russia's and the EU's energy security objectives.

In contrast, it may be argued that the EU energy securitization discourses of years 2014-2017 revealed the shift towards stronger securitization of the Union's energy ties with Russia. In connection to this, much of the political rhetoric shows concerns about the reliability of the Russia's gas exports to Europe, underlining the need for diversification of suppliers, routes and sources of natural gas in the context of the EU Energy Security Strategy, in attempts to decrease the Union's reliance from gas exports from the Russian source.

6. CONCLUSION.

For long energy trade has been viewed as an important element of EU– (Soviet) Russia relations. In this instance natural gas trade has been allocated a special role in shaping the cooperation between the two. This is given the difference in the structural and economic terms of its trade when compared to other types of fossil fuels, which, all other things equal, leads to path-dependent nature of energy relations between the actors involved. Since 1968 when the Soviet natural gas first came to Austria, in the course of several decades Russia and the European Union have quickly emerged as strategic partners in the field of energy trade. However, it may be claimed that in the last two decades the energy security has emerged as a divisive issue in between two partner's contributing to deterioration of their mutual relations.

It is a commonly perceived that Russia and the EU are extremely interdependent in terms of their energy trade. Given the EU's role of being the biggest market in the world for fossil fuels and Russia's position as one of the largest energy suppliers globally, this is not too hard to envisage. Indeed, for Russia revenues received from natural gas exports to European customers make up a significant share of the overall export income of the state. Likewise, for the EU natural gas imported from Russia constitutes the major fraction of energy flows delivered from external supplier and for some member states and stands as a single source of external energy flows in the case of some EU member states.

Moreover, it was argued that, on the one hand, Russia does not have a clear alternative of diversification of natural gas, at least in the short to medium term and in the scale comparable to its notably well-established west-bound supplies (Binhack and Tichý, 2012, p. 61). That being said, on the other hand, for Europe the growth of energy demand has been taking place in the light of decrease in indigenous supplies, which was mostly due to the progressive depletion of North Sea resources as well as declining production of Groningen field in the Netherlands (Siddi, 2018, p.3).

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century debates around EU-Russia relations in the context of pipeline politics have been on the front burner in both European Union and Russia political circles. From mid 2000s Russian Energy Policy underwent a significant transformation also becoming more central to the state's foreign policy. In this context a security of energy exports became an issue of special political focus, given their status of substantial source of revenues for the budget of Russian Federation and thus importance for

country's position on the international arena. Likewise, a security of energy supply has gradually emerged as a cornerstone of the EU Energy Policy, which was, for the first time in the history of the Union, given a special legal basis under provisions of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the issue relating to security of European energy supplies has been transferred to high politics domain.

It has to be noted that 2006 and 2009 Russian-Ukrainian gas disputes that resulted in serious disruptions of natural gas deliveries to some EU member states, contributed to somewhat shift in previously stable EU-Russia relations in the field. Meantime, with the topic of EU-Russia relations in the context of energy security reaching the top of political agendas in both of the states concerned. That being said, it may be argued that the 2013/2014 Ukrainian crisis, culminating in Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, dramatically altered the political framework of Russia's natural gas trade with the European Union leading to considerable tensions in relations in between the two actors.

In addition to being a subject of some hot political debates, in last decades the theme of EU-Russia relations in the context of the energy trade has been drawn a considerable attention in academic world. Most of the studies though were focused on either analysis of material conditions of the EU-Russia energy trade or the structures of governance guiding the relations between the parties in the field. In connection to this the author noted that there was no adequate scholarly consideration given to analysis of the role of ideas and believes of the EU and Russia about each other and their partnership in decision-making process concerning the area of their mutual energy trade.

Therefore, whilst certainly giving a credit to importance of economic as well as institutional factors in the EU-Russia energy relations, in the present study the author attempted to exploit the shortcomings in the previous research and explored the EU-Russia energy relations through the prism of constructivist perspective. This accounts for the role of ideas and perception in determining the relationship between the actors concerned.

The choice of the approach was based on understanding that rather than the material supremacy of Russian gas in the European energy sector or the importance of the revenues of European sales for Russia's economy or operational and otherwise legal frameworks governing EU-Russia energy trade, it is perceptions of both of the actors about their mutual relations in the field that are also truly fundamental.

The aim of the present study was to explore the EU-Russia relations in the area of energy trade and when the issue is looked at from perspective of each of the actors' respective energy securities. In particular, the author aimed at examining of socially constructed security concerns that may influence the EU and Russia relations in the field.

The present study drew from previous research on the topic, specifically the work of Kratochvil & Tichy (2013) that defines the possible approaches to the European Union and Russian energy discourses dealing with their mutual energy relations. Taking advantage of this as a starting point and using a securitization theory coined by Copenhagen School of Security Studies as an analytical framework the author further deployed discourse analysis as a methodological tool in order to examine series of political rhetoric pertaining to the issue of EU-Russia relations in the context of energy security. This is concerned with stability of natural gas supply in the context of the European Union and stability of demands for gas exports when the issue is considered from Russian perspective.

In this instance the author relied on energy securitization discourses from both the EU's and Russian side to become especially pronounced in the aftermath of 2014 Ukrainian crisis involving Russia's annexation of Crimea and yet another Russia-Ukraine gas dispute, with 2014 thus taken as a starting point for analysis. Subsequently, for the purpose of the present study a dataset consisted of 70 speeches, interviews and statements of key European Union politicians as well as Russian political leaders during years 2014-2017 and concerned with the matter of securitizations of the natural gas trade relations between the actors concerned was collected and analysed.

The analysis of the content of both EU's and Russia's energy securitization discourses revealed a presence of some cross related key themes that demonstrated certain similarities as well as differences in actors' interpretations of their mutual energy trade and the implications of such for each of the party's respective energy securities.

The discourses suggest that both the EU and Russia identify themselves as important global energy market players with statements made from each side pointing out on overall benefits of their mutual cooperation in the area of energy trade. However, deterioration of relations between two actors was commonly admitted.

In Russia's energy securitization discourses Europe is seen as significant market for the country's energy exports with the reference to that Russian politicians were stressing on the role of Russia as a reliable and stable supplier that is beneficial for Europe in the context of its energy security. That being said, Russia's energy securitization discourses also state about the country's intention to diversify its gas transportation routes as well as to get hold of new energy markets, notably those of a South Pacific region. However, according Russia's politicians this is done with the view to strengthen the country's position on the global energy market rather than with the goal to reorient its gas exports away from Europe.

In turn, the EU's energy securitization discourses on its relations with Russia do acknowledge the importance of Russian natural gas supplies for Europe and the willingness of Brussels to eventually find "modus vivendi" in relations between the two parties. Having said that analyzed rhetoric revealed that EU political leaders having doubts about the reliability of Russian energy exports with notable concerns also expressed in regards to the country's intentions to use its natural resources for political purposes. It has to be noted that such mistrustful perceptions about Russia and related EU's energy related security concerns are to be seen as repercussions of events of 2006 and 2009 and in turn became more pronounced since 2014 Ukrainian crisis and subsequent Russia-Ukraine gas dispute. As a result the Union's energy dependence on Russia is perceived to be a damaging for energy security of the EU as a whole.

One of the key topics of both Russia and EU energy securitization discourses concerned with interpretations in regards to the role of Ukraine as the main corridor country for Russian natural gas supplied to Europe. According to analyzed dataset, Russian politicians are concerned about the reliability of Ukraine as a transit country for gas supplies to the EU. In this regards it was voiced that economic and political troubles Ukraine is going through might endanger the stability of energy transit flows thus compromising the European energy security of supply. In contrast, the evidence from EU energy securitization discourses suggest that Brussels sees Ukraine as good and trustworthy gas transit partner highlighting the importance of the role of this transit route for the EU energy security.

It may be argued that over the years 2014-2017 Russia has been going through the process of *de-securitization* of its energy relations with the European Union. This is suggested by the strongly political rhetoric underlining the benefits of EU-Russia energy partnership for both

of parties concerned. Moreover, the discourses revealed attempts of Russian political leaders to convince Brussels to change its position in regards to new infrastructure projects, particularly Nord Stream 2, but also TurkStream, highlighting their importance for ensuring the security of Russia's energy flows to European markets. The discourses revealed that Russia considers its natural gas exports to the EU to be crucial for European energy security and is prepared to maintain the uninterrupted energy supplies to the European customers. In this instance and with the reference to the previous research done on the subject, it has to be noted that this thesis findings confirm the outcomes of the study conducted by Tichy (2018), which suggests about the similar stance of Russia taken in relations to its energy relations with the European Union.

That being said, it may be claimed that, in contrast, the EU has been going through the processes of *securitization* of its relations with Russia in the context of energy trade. The analysis of speeches, interviews and statements of EU political leaders revealed a substantial degree of mistrust expressed towards the Russian energy partner. To that end, diversifications of routes, sources and partners is considered key for ensuring European energy security which is also seen in diminishing the Union's dependence on natural gas exports from Russia.

In addition, it is worthwhile mentioning that the European Union has perhaps has succeed more in talking about energy solidarity in the context of Energy Union rather than at achieving it. This is because bilateral contracts between EU member states Russia for natural gas deliveries remained to be a normal course of action, whilst the issue of the Union's interdependence with Russia led to more friction than agreements. Most notably taking into account the intra-EU controversy on Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, which, in the light of receiving considerable degree of opposition on the supranational level as well as from the side of some EU nations, is favoured by some other, most influential, EU member states.

As a final remark, it is worthwhile pointing out that both ideas and perceptions as much as identified are all fluid concepts that evolve over the time in line with changes in political and economic environments in which states found themselves to operate. Thus, a follow up study on the similar topic might be beneficial to learn about any shifts in a way both the European Union and Russia see themselves and each other in the context of their respective energy securities when it comes to their cooperation in the area of energy trade. This, in turn, assists

in better predicting as well as understanding the future political steps taken by the parties with regards to their cooperation in the field.

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